United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1495
8 October 1993

FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ General Assembly decides to lift economic sanctions against South Africa; oil embargo to end when Transitional Executive Council becomes operational.

+ Chad, Cameroon, Lesotho and Moldova among speakers today in General Assembly's general debate.

+ Yemen, Jamaica, Iraq, Mauritania, Uganda and Sudan among speakers in yesterday's general debate.

+ Secretary-General welcomes United States President's address on Somalia yesterday; says he agrees his analysis of situation; plans to visit Somalia and Addis Ababa next week to promote political reconciliation.

+ WFP to provide food aid to 140,000 poor Palestinians in Gaza; $3.5 million project described as first concrete assistance to Palestinians by United Nations since recent signing of Israeli/PLO peace agreement.

• • •

The General Assembly this morning adopted by consensus a resolution lifting the economic sanctions it first imposed against South Africa in 1962. The Assembly ended all prohibitions and restrictions on economic relations with South Africa and its nationals, including in the areas of trade, investment, finance, travel and transportation. By this resolution, it also decided that the embargo on the supply of petroleum and petroleum products to South Africa, and investment in the petroleum industry there, would be lifted when the country's recently legislated Transitional Executive Council becomes operational.

The Chairman of the Special Committee against Apartheid, Ibrahim Gambari (Nigeria), said that by adopting the resolution the Assembly would send a very strong signal to the South African people that the international community and the United Nations were ready to assist them in the economic reconstruction of

(more)

For information media---not an official record

their country, and to ensure that the new South Africa would begin its existence unhampered by the constraints imposed on the old South Africa.

The United Nations arms embargo against South Africa was imposed by the Security Council and is not affected by the General Assembly resolution. In December 1991, in response to moves by the South African Government to dismantle apartheid, the Assembly ended its prohibition against academic, scientific, cultural and sports contacts with the country. Two weeks ago, the President of the African National Congress of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, in an address delivered in the Assembly hall, called for the lifting of economic sanctions.

* * *

Fidel Moungar, the Prime Minister of Chad, told the General Assembly this morning that his country had set out on the road to democracy in 1990 and earlier this year a National Conference had set up a framework for stable democratic institutions. He said the transition Government was making great efforts to implement the objectives of the National Conference. The restructuring of the national army would open up the way to better control of public expenditures, but substantial resources were required for the army's reconversion and reintegration into civilian life. He thanked France for the assistance it had been providing in that regard for the last three years, and appealed to the international community for further assistance.

The Government of Chad was taking steps to strengthen human rights, especially with regard to the freedom of the press and the establishment of political parties, he said. However, cases of human rights abuses still arose. Democracy, poverty and insecurity were not good neighbours, he went on to say. In addition to a lack of rainfall and the threat of locusts, Chad was suffering from severe economic difficulties which had caused social conditions to deteriorate. The country sought to implement a consistent programme of macro-economic adjustment and reform by improving public finances, relaunching productive activities, rationalizing management and advancing the private sector. It hoped for understanding and greater support from the international community, he said.

* * *

Speaking in the general debate today, the Foreign Minister of Cameroon, Ferdinand Léopold Oyono, warned that the remarkable improvements in the situation in the Middle East and in South Africa could not mask the danger to international peace and security posed by the persistence of armed conflict, the emergence of nationalism and religious intolerance, poverty and under-development. He called for a restoration of peace and the democratic process in Angola, and expressed the hope that Liberia, Somalia and Mozambique would find the stability to reconstruct their countries. In Western Sahara, he added, there was still a chance that the obstacles to holding a referendum on its future status would be overcome by the negotiations currently underway.

(more)

Meeting the challenge of peace did not only mean silencing weapons, he said. His Government asked that, within the framework of the settlement of regional conflicts, the resources be mobilised to meet humanitarian needs and the imperatives of reconstruction of the African countries that had been ravaged by armed conflict. The will of the Heads of State of Africa to assume greater responsibility for handling conflicts in their region would thereby be strengthened, he said, and added that the mechanism established towards that end at the 29th summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) should be supported by the international community. He pointed out that it was part of the implementation of the "Agenda for Peace" adopted by the Security Council and was consonant with the Non-Aggression Pact recently signed by the 11 members of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).

* * *

Nicolae Anton Tâu, Moldova's Minister of Foreign Affairs, stated in the general debate today that international organizations such as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Community had a crucial role in the strengthening of international peace and security, but that the United Nations role remained decisive. However, recent regional conflicts, particularly in the former Yugoslavia, indicated a need to improve the international machinery dealing with peace and security issues. The Security Council's membership should be increased, while maintaining its efficiency, he said.

Moldova's principled position on human rights had been challenged by "the separatist forces in Transdniestria, inspired and supported from abroad", he continued. Allegations by some in the Russian Federation that the conflict started by those forces was an inter-ethnic one were not true; it was a political conflict aimed at rebuilding a new imperial structure. The presence of foreign military forces in Moldova was the main source of insecurity and instability in the country, he said. Therefore, the Russian Federation should not be entrusted with a mandate for peace-keeping operations in the conflict zones of the former Soviet Union. He proposed that an additional item be included on the agenda of the General Assembly on the question of the complete withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territory of Moldova.

* * *

The Foreign Minister of Lesotho, Molapo Qhobela, told the General Assembly today that the United Nations had to recognise its need for increased resources and more balanced burden-sharing among Member States. Like a world parliament, the Organization must also reflect in its structures the same democratic values that it advocated, he said. The need for democratization extended in particular to the Security Council. Africa accounted for almost one third of the United Nations Membership and there should be positive consideration of its interest in being allotted at least two permanent seats in the Council and an increased number of non-permanent seats.

Mr. Qhobela said his Government regarded the overwhelming popular mandate it received in the general elections this year as a golden opportunity to

(more)

address the urgent national issues of poverty, ignorance and disease. It appealed to the donor community to lend a helping with those efforts. The situation in South Africa was always a cause of concern for Lesotho, he continued, as it was his country's only immediate neighbour. He supported the lifting of economic sanctions against South Africa, but also urged the United Nations to upgrade its monitoring team there. He said he hoped that the lessons of Lesotho's peaceful transition to democracy would not be lost on the citizens of South Africa as they gained their first opportunity to elect a government of their choice.

* * *

Mohamed Salem Basendwah, Foreign Minister of Yemen, said in the General Assembly yesterday that in 1990 his country had regained its unity and this was the first time Yemen had addressed the United Nations as one nation. In April 1993 Yemen had had free parliamentary elections, monitored by Western and Arab observers. His country was proud, because the unification and the elections were events that had been impossible to imagine four years ago.

Since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, his country had suffered the terrible consequences, he continued. More than 2 million citizens had returned, yet Yemen had received no foreign assistance to deal with them. His Government was against the acquisition of territory by force and, as an Arab country, it was concerned by those events and breaches in Arab solidarity. He urged Iraq to cooperate with international provisions. Its most recent moves indicated it was prepared to do that, which warranted a removal of sanctions. The Iraqi people, he said, had suffered enough. Kuwait should have a guarantee that the events leading to the invasion would not be repeated, but it should also understand that its sovereignty must be based on equitable relations between itself and Iraq.

* * *

Paul D. Robertson, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, said yesterday in the general debate that unsupervised economic globalization, coupled with escalating political fragmentation, could ignite fierce conflict between economic blocs and social groups worldwide. The present dilemma was how to capitalize collectively on the globalization, while avoiding fragmentation due to the resurgence of religious intolerance, ethnicity and chauvinistic nationalism. A shared economic development consensus could provide the basis for more equitable participation for the less developed countries.

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) had put in place mechanisms to enhance regional trading, he said. At the same time, the Community was faced with the herculean task of avoiding or minimizing the short- to medium-run adverse impacts which were likely to befall its members when the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) took effect. The gains achieved under existing agreements must not be eroded, he said. Meanwhile, conditionality applied to loans provided by international financial institutions must be made more appropriate to developing economies, he stressed, and adjustment must take

(more)

place over an extended period, must minimize social distress and must be growth-oriented.

* * *

Mohammed Said Al-Sahaf, the Foreign Minister of Iraq, told the General Assembly yesterday that his country had fulfilled its obligations under resolution 687, which relates to its weapons of mass destruction. He called upon the Security Council to lift the "unjust blockade" imposed against Iraq three years ago and to lift all restrictions which were no longer justified. Within the framework of its serious and continuous attempts to reveal the truth, his country had sought to find solutions to the outstanding issues through a responsible dialogue based on justice and fairness and consistent with international law and the Charter.

He went on to say that the Organization was in need, more than ever before, of cooperation among its Member States to save it from attempts to turn it into a tool to serve the selfish interests of certain dominant Powers, particularly the United States. He said it was 12 years since the Security Council adopted its resolution 487 (1981) on the military aggression carried out by Israel against the Iraqi nuclear reactor, and the Council had failed to do anything to ensure its implementation. The United Nations, he continued, was being forced to engage in a military operation in Somalia under the pretext of providing humanitarian assistance, yet it was incapable of taking any appropriate action to alleviate the bitter human suffering in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the other parts of former Yugoslavia.

* * *

Mohamed Abderahmane Ould Moine, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Mauritania, said in the general debate yesterday that his country, currently presiding over the session of the League of Arab States, reaffirmed that Arabs had never been warlike. Arabs and Palestinians had shown that peace could be attained in spite of their sufferings in the Middle East conflict. Peace was the foundation of the Arab civilization; it was a way of life for those whose salutations meant peace and whose prayers ended with peace. He said Mauritania rejected violation of the unity and integrity of Kuwait, but his country also rejected prohibitions against Iraq. He appealed for relief of the sufferings of women and children in Iraq.

Continuing, he said in the Arab Maghreb, in spite of efforts to lay a foundation of peace and prosperity, two important problems had emerged at a recent summit in Nouakchott. Those continued to preoccupy the leaders and the peoples. First was the question of Western Sahara. The United Nations had continued to make efforts to resolve that situation, he said, and Mauritania would continue to work towards a just and lasting solution. Such a resolution would be a factor of stability in the Maghreb region. Secondly, regarding the blockade against Libya, Mauritania hoped the Security Council resolution would be reviewed.

* * *

Paul K. Ssemogerere, Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda, speaking in the general debate yesterday, urged the international community to find the will to face political, economic, ecological and social challenges that stood in the way of the emancipation of the developing countries. Turning to the issue of conflict resolution, he stressed the importance of actually having the capacity to enforce solutions where agreements existed. He referred to a number of agreements brokered between the parties by regional organizations or by the United Nations that had then been deliberately scuttled, for instance in Yugoslavia, Somalia, Liberia and Angola.

There was an intrinsic relationship between the disarmament process and development, he continued. Unfortunately, at the international level, the "peace dividend" was yet to be channelled towards assistance to developing countries. At the national level, Uganda was scaling down its army to a level that the economy could sustain, and still met legitimate defence needs. That decision should release resources for development. He expressed appreciation to those countries and organizations which had agreed to assist in the resettlement and integration of demobilized soldiers.

* * *

Hussein Suliman Abu Salih, the Foreign Minister of Sudan, said in the general debate yesterday that if developing countries were allowed equitable participation in the resolutions taken by the United Nations, their contribution could be more effective, especially in regional and international peace and security. "Preventive diplomacy and the subsequent use of political and military force cannot be applied only against less privileged countries and vulnerable peoples", he stated. A new formula within the framework of the current international arrangement would guarantee the rights of all and salvage the world from the hegemony by the stronger over the less privileged.

He outlined his Government's priorities designed to reach a just and lasting peace in southern Sudan, including its readiness to talk peace with the rebels without preconditions. His Government had put forward a comprehensive peace framework based on remedying the lingering causes of the conflict, such as adoption of a federal system of government to meet the aspirations of different regions for a genuine sharing of power, and the exemption of the South from the application of Sharia laws. He said the Government had also accepted a quadrilateral peace initiative put forward by the Heads of State of Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Eritrea, and had accepted the offer by former United States President Jimmy Carter to mediate between the Government and the rebel factions.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has welcomed United States President Bill Clinton's address on Somalia yesterday, saying that the President's analysis of the situation there, and of the role of the United Nations and the United States, was fully consistent with his. According to a United Nations spokesman, the Secretary-General was grateful to the President

(more)

for having highlighted the Organization's many achievements in Somalia, and for having corrected many of the misperceptions which had surfaced in recent weeks.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali felt President Clinton had rightly emphasized that the ultimate responsibility for finding a solution to the crisis in the country lay with the Somali people, the spokesman said. The international community had taken action to fill a grave vacuum, out of humanitarian concern. The President had also correctly recalled that the United Nations mandate in Somalia, given by the Security Council, included the delivery of humanitarian assistance, promoting political reconciliation and disarming those elements responsible for the tragedy which had occurred, and which was still unfolding in part of Mogadishu. The sensational events of the last few days had diverted attention from the fact that in most of Somalia today virtually no one was starving, district councils were being formed, and the nation was "rising from the embers".

The Secretary-General would visit Somalia and Addis Ababa next week to resume his efforts to promote political reconciliation, the spokesman continued. As before, he would be relying heavily on the assistance of the countries of the area, as well as on regional organizations. The Secretary-General was happy to be able to count on the continued support of the United States Government in that effort.

* * *

The World Food Programme (WFP) announced yesterday that it would be providing food aid to 140,000 of the poorest Palestinians in Gaza. The $3.5 million project is the first concrete development support by the United Nations for Palestinians in the Occupied Territories since the recent signing of a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Catherine Bertini, WFP Executive Director, said such aid was critical during the current transition period, and that by purchasing the supplies from local farmers, WFP would be helping stimulate the local economy.

According to WFP, many people living in the Gaza Strip could no longer afford to buy their basic daily food because the economy in the area had virtually collapsed in the aftermath of the Gulf War, and with the tightening of security restrictions by Israel. Recent surveys had found that half the pregnant Palestinian women there were suffering from malnutrition and doctors had reported a marked increase in the number of children diagnosed with malnutrition-related diseases.

* *** *